

omplish that goal. As well there are some social prisoners sucked into the prison machine who have become conscious through the daily, punishing repression, brutality, racism, and injustice. These comrades, men like George Jackson, Ruchell Magee, Hugo Pinell and many others, stepped beyond their social offenses and mapping-victimization, beyond the individualism demanded by the prison system to challenge the system consciously, as self-determining protagonists. They became enemies of the state, subject to that specific jacket treatment for political prisoners. Comrades such as these are murdered by the prison or languish in control prisons for decades as well.

Political prisoners come from their communities, become conscious. Part of that consciousness is understanding that we are from the community of oppressed and exploited. Many political prisoners were active opposing the prison system long before we ever imagined that we would end up prisoners. Many continue to work against concentration camp USA once released. The injustice and inhumanity of the prison system are only logical extensions or conclusions of the overall inequalities of the entire system. We oppose cruelty, brutality, inhumanity in the system and in our communities.

There will be more political prisoners as it becomes more imperative to resist the rapacious, humanizing system, as our social and political movements grow stronger and challenge more directly globalization, capitalism, and the increasingly militarized police state. After all, the State is more invested in social control than in freedom. (It was caught off guard in Seattle at the anti-WTO demonstrations but reacted in a predictable manner.) What will be the destination of the 60 people still being charged there in Seattle? What about the activist given a one-year sentence in Oregon for throwing a rock in an anti-globalization demonstration last summer? Or Khalil Guebs-Fantauzzi, the Puerto Rican comrade who was the only person to face trial after demonstrations against corporate seizure of KPFA radio in Berkeley last summer? Khalil is an anti-prison activist and played a leading organizing role in California in the campaign to free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and political prisoners. He was acquitted after taking his case to trial).

Many social and political activists have escalated their work in support of prisoners and to challenge the brutal slave-labor prison establishment. This growth was reflected in the timely, qualitative conference of Political Resistance in Fall 1998. The work of activists contributed to creating the conditions in which Amnesty International at last issued a report on human rights in the U.S., in the face of U.S. power and imperial pronouncements that it is the godfather of democracy and human rights. Prisoners in even the deepest of holes are feeling some hope despite the downward spiral of inhuman treatment and increasing demonization.

Yet in the midst of this rise of activism, there seems to be a reticence to support political prisoners and Prisoners of War, or a tendency to say that there are no differences in consciousness, or roles of prisoners - for example, "all prisoners are political prisoners" since imprisonment is a political policy. Some pamphlets about prison support work include "support for political prisoners and POWs" but little about who we are or why we should be supported as part of prison activism. Surely supporting political prisoners is not an impediment to the work of opposing the prison establishment or fighting for more humane conditions. We, too, experience the full range of repression. We are here because we have challenged that social repression!

At times it seems the hesitance to support is precisely because of our politics, our political consciousness and actions. Perhaps the conscious, relative political "crimes" we have been charged with admitting conflict with some people's own political strategies. But should we as a movement not encourage consciousness, and self-determining, creative and collective protagonists in the struggle for human dignity and rights?

There is always room to debate politics, points of view, strategies and tactics. To confront differences and questions is a good thing. Any struggle for liberation demands free and open debate of ideas and practice. At the same time, active struggles need to support those who act consciously, politically. To do so is a part of asserting the right to struggle as well as to defend activism and promote stronger resistance to the military, police, and political apparatus that denies our society and the whole world true equality and justice.

*Editors note: This article was written in late 1999, or early 2000 - so, obviously it is a bit out of date. None of those arrested during the '99 anti-WTO riots and protests received lengthy jail sentences, and some lawsuits surrounding acts of police brutality are still pending. While some of the thoughts expressed in this article are no longer valid, overall this article is still extremely relevant today.*

## THE REAL TERRORISTS

In a city council meeting that took place on November 22, 2000, the government of Portland, Oregon approved the establishment of an "anti-terrorism" task force comprised of agents from the FBI and the Portland Police Bureau. This task force is being set up to investigate the activities of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Most likely the investigation will be extended to anarchist as well, though they were not specifically mentioned in the report I read.

For several years now people have been taking direct action against the destruction of the earth and the exploitation of animals using the acronyms ELF and ALF to claim these actions. But the ELF and the ALF do not exist as formal organizations with membership. Rather anyone who takes such action and wishes to claim it in these names can do so by anonymously sending a communique to the ELF or ALF press office. One may raise questions about the wisdom of those who take such actions using the same acronyms and, thus, making it easier for the authorities to paint an image of a "terrorist" organization, but those in power will always find ways to demonize who rebel—especially with a consciously revolutionary intent.

What is, in fact, of great significance in this is the use of the word "terrorism" to describe direct action. Direct action is action taken by an individual or self-organized group in order to directly and autonomously bring about a desired end—that is, to bring it about oneself rather than appealing to an authority to act in one's place. Terrorism, on the other hand, is the attempt to induce fear in people in order to compel them to act or refrain from acting in accordance with the terrorist's will. From this it should be clear that direct action is the most consistent method for anarchists and other revolutionaries who favor autonomy and self-determination to use in pursuing their projects and aims, whereas terrorism, in the true sense of the term, is the method of power, the method for imposing domination and exploitation, for frightening people not only into accepting their submission to their present miserable condition, but into imposing and enforcing it themselves.

The ELF actions described in various radical publications have been direct actions. Their intent has been to cause enough economic damage to a particular development to stop it or at least significantly slow its progress. The liberation of animals from exploitative institutions and the destruction of genetically engineered crops are also direct, autonomous actions, not acts of terrorism.

Anarchists have said over and over again that the state and capital are the real terrorists. And who could say otherwise after examining how they enforce their will? A uniformed, armed force patrols the streets of every city imposing



the will of the ruling class. Nuclear, biological and chemical weapons send their messages of the need to comply with the demands of those who control them and whisper in the back of even the most rebellious minds of the need for "social peace"—this peace which always rests on terror. The threat of poverty—homelessness, material want, even starvation—sits in the recesses of the worker's mind keeping her compliant. The examples are endless since this terror, used by those who rule us for the explicit purpose of keeping us in line, is in fact the atmosphere of our daily existence.

The irony of the establishment of this anti-terrorist? task force in Portland is that, upon careful examination, it also exposes who the real terrorists are. The actions of the ELF and the ALF (specifically targeted by this task force), those that have attacked genetically engineered crops, the actions of anarchists in solidarity with FIES hunger strikers and other prisoners, against militarism, against a multitude of state and capitalist projects are potentially the very opposite of terrorism. Instead of frightening people into submission, such actions have the potential of exposing the vulnerability of the institutions and projects of the rulers of this society, the ease with which they can be attacked and damaged. Thus, they can encourage people to take action themselves, to rise up in revolt against that which impoverishes their existence. The state needs to act quickly and fiercely against this possibility, and one of its most important strategies is to demonize those who act autonomously, thus inducing fear of this sort of action. The state does this by labeling autonomous rebels as "terrorists" and direct action as "terrorism." These blinding labels make it difficult for people to see through to the actual actions in order to come to their own understanding. In this way, the rulers terrorize those they rule not only into refraining from rebellion themselves, but into fearing and hating the rebel as well. But it is not the rebel who has induced this terror, but the state through its insidious machinations. Thus, in this "anti-terrorist" task force, the terrorism of the state is exposed again.

From the moment they came into existence, the state, capital and the entire network of institutions through which they maintain control have been warring against life, against wildness, against individual freedom and against self-determined relationships. Those who have dared to stand up against this have always been demonized, called lunatics, criminals, terrorists. But, in fact, we have been fighting against an existence so rationalized that very few can reason for themselves any more, so controlled that there are none left who are innocent before the law, and so permeated by the terror of power that fear itself has simply become part of the ennui, the bland horror, that passes for life today. Against the terrorism of power, we will not give up our fight.

## Prisons, Social Control and Political Prisoners

By Anti-Imperialist Political Prisoner/ Prisoner Of War

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Increasingly, the globalization of markets and profit-seeking has pressed U.S. prisons to become profit-generating enterprises - the prison-industrial complex.

Nevertheless, prisons continue to serve their main purpose as well: to warehouse and disappear the "unacceptable." Prisons exist to deprive their captives of their liberties, their human agency, and to punish. These institutions stigmatize prisoners through moralistic denunciations and indictments based on bad genes - skin color as a crime.

The law - a political institution in itself provides the framework for the war of social control against oppressed nations, working classes and non-compliant women.

The vast majority of prisoners are not imprisoned because they are "criminals," but because they've been accused of breaking one of an ever-increasing number of laws designed to exert tighter social control and State repression. They have been scapegoated and criminalized. This can be seen in the increased number of Black, Latino, Native American and Asian youth detained under youth-crime acts and "anti-gang" laws; the number of foreign nationals (excluding most Europeans) imprisoned under hate-mongering immigration laws; and of course, the "drug" war in which hundreds of thousands have been kidnapped from their communities, even from other countries. These sweeping laws embody and embolden U.S. capitalist policies to criminalize and decimate targeted populations and to sustain a hostage Third World and white working-class wage-labor force behind prison walls. Most prisoners, by virtue of their ethnicity and class, are victims of ethnic-cleansing policies - death deferred to incarceration.

There are other "undesirables" as well: those who have consciously, politically resisted, opposed - even attacked - the injustices and inequalities of this State system of social control. These prisoners are political prisoners, historically among the most feared and despised by those who wield State power. In the 1950's, COINTELPRO (the Federal Counter INTELligence PROgram) was created. It employed dirty-tricks, disinformation, militarized police agencies and assassination in its political war against the national liberation, anti-imperialist and anti capitalist forces. Imprisonment was also, and continues to be, one of its weapons against political activists.

The state shows little mercy to its political enemies. The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal is a current well-known example. He was denied even a modicum of a fair trial, under more "liberal" standards than exist in this period. Geronimo ji-Jaga (Pratt) and Leonard Peltier were both framed for murders by Federal and local COINTELPRO forces. Geronimo was freed after much struggle and 27 years. Leonard is still in prison. Assata Shakur was convicted of a police killing she could not have done and is only free in exile. More than a few political prisoners remain imprisoned for nearly two decades and some for nearly three decades - the Angola Three, the New York Three, Black Panthers and New Afrikan militants, Puerto Rican independentistas, North American anti-imperialist solidarity fighters, and other comrades. To be a political prisoner is neither a comfortable nor a privileged situation. To remain committed to one's beliefs and principles exacts a heavy price. Political prisoners in New York state prisons are rarely held in the same prison. Many have spent years, even a decade, in isolation control units for no other reason than their political association and "political crimes." Many have been denied health care for security reasons. Enemies of the state are deliberately targeted, subject to continual surveillance. The state is determined to destroy us. On purpose. Not merely because the prison system is a vehicle of equal-opportunity punishment and casual cruelty that is by its very nature crushing the life and breath from its victims and hostages.

To be a political prisoner is not a matter of standing higher in a "hierarchy" of prisoners. Where one stands is a matter of consciousness, not of social status or privilege. It is a placement based in political practice and international law. A U.S. court has even noted that "crimes" must be looked at differently when carried out in furtherance of a political struggle against a State. There are both pure political offenses (like sedition) and relative political offenses. These include "otherwise common crimes committed in connection with a political act, or common crimes committed for political motives or in a political context." The court goes on to say in relation to political status and international law:

It is the fact that the insurgents are seeking to change their governments that makes the political offense exception applicable, not the reasons for wishing to do so or the nature of the acts by which they hope to